

The Best Present by Aceofstars16

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Summary:

Christmas. For Hopper, it has been good and bad. For El, it was unknown until a year ago. But this year it might just be the best Christmas yet. (just me writing a fluffy Christmas fic, hope all y'all have a great Christmas!)

The Best Present

Author's Note:

[Tumblr post](#)

Hopper had gotten a lot of presents in his lifetime. Most of them faded. They would be given or thrown away, meaningful once but meaningless after a time. A few stayed with him. The tie Sara had decorated and given him, a card she had drawn all her own. The only ones that he cared about had been from Sara. But he could never bring himself to look at them for long. The season was just too painful. A reminder of all he had lost. Years passed by and the holiday no longer held any joy. He went to the police department's Christmas party because people would wonder if he didn't, but it never felt happy. Most of the time he drowned out his sorrows with alcohol, waking up the next day feeling just as miserable as ever. He didn't expect anything to change. How could it when his life had fallen apart?

But the Christmas of 1983 changed all of that. He had taken food to the lock box the night before, for a cryptic that hunters claimed was stealing their food. But Hopper knew better. The descriptions of a girl that could make things fly could only be one person. Eleven. He didn't know what he had expected from helping her out. All he knew was that he couldn't just sit around knowing she was out there freezing and starving.

1983 he had taken her into his grandpa's messy old hunting cabin. A year later they were in the same cabin. But the cabin looked much different now. Lights hung around the cozy living room – borrowed from Joyce, she had a plethora of them after all. A tree was nestled in the side of the room. Some simple ornaments hung from its branches and an old star Hopper had found was balanced precociously at the top.

Morning light was shining softly through the window, made brighter by the snow that had yet to melt from the snowfall a few days ago. It all seemed so surreal. Sure, it wasn't grand. Only a few presents sat under the tree and the decorations were far from glamorous. But as

Hopper surveyed the scene before him, he shook his head in disbelief. Who would've guessed that a little telekinetic girl would've made his life so much better?

Poking his head into El's room, he saw her sleeping peacefully – a rarity for her, but if anyone deserved a peaceful Christmas sleep it was her. Hopper knew he should wake her up, but he found himself simply watching her, unable to hold back a small smile as he realized that no present would ever measure up to the gift he had gotten last year. El had given him a reason to live again. She reminded him how to laugh, how to smile, how to live. She wasn't Sara - he would never get his little girl back. But this year he had a daughter again. Her laugh was a little quiet, her social skills were a lacking, and sometimes she was a little...difficult, but Hopper loved her all the same and for the first time in years, he was excited for Christmas.

El had never had a Christmas before. Or at least not a legitimate one according to Hopper. But there was a bubbling excitement in her chest as she sat down in front of the tree, eagerly grabbing a present before rushing over and handing it to Hopper.

"You don't want to open yours?" There was a confused expression on his face, as he tilted his head.

"No. You first." El said, nervousness building in her chest. She hadn't known what to give him at first. Not having money meant she had to make something, and she didn't have much experience with crafting things, but thankfully for her, the boys had a little experience.

"Okay, if you're sure."

The paper was torn off to reveal a thin box – Mike had let her borrow that, in fact he had helped her wrap the whole thing. Hopper carefully removed the lid and pulled out the presents – a sheet of paper, or more specifically a drawing Will had helped her with, and a bracelet. A smile appeared on his face as he looked at the drawing, but as she looked closer it almost looked like he was...sad?

“Do...do you like it?” El asked quietly. She so wanted to do Christmas right, to let him know how much she appreciated all that he had done for her. And per Mike’s suggestion she had even written Merry Christmas Dad on the picture, maybe it had been too much. After all, she still wasn’t quite used to the fact that she had a dad now, despite the fact that Hopper had felt like family for a while now.

“Yeah...yeah, I love it.” He looked up at her, a smile on his face that reached his eyes.

Relief and joy washed over El as she smiled back. Then she quickly pointed to the bracelet. “Mike helped me make that. So we can match.” She held up her arm, displaying the bracelet he had given her after he had officially become her father.

Hopper picked up the bracelet carefully, that sadness washed over his features again, but then he looked up. “It’s perfect,” he said quietly, then held out his arm. “Come here, you.” A grin broke out on El’s face as she flung her arms around him and felt him return the hug.

“Merry Christmas...dad.” She mumbled into his sweater, still unsure about the word. But as his arms tightened around her, she relaxed.

“Merry Christmas, El.”